



STANDARDS AND CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT

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Standards and Conformity Assessment in China

Overview

China's conformity assessment policies and standards are largely developed by two quasi-independent agencies, the Standardization Administration of China (SAC) and the China National Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA); the two entities play a dominant role in standards development and conformity assessment policies respectively, and are administratively under the Chinese government's Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine (AQSIQ).

The creation of AQSIQ in 2001 was the result of China's merger of two prior government agencies, its domestic standards and conformity assessment agency and its entry-exit inspection and quarantine agency. Chinese officials explained that this merger was designed to eliminate discriminatory treatment of imports and requirements for multiple testing simply because a product was imported rather than domestically produced.

In general, exporters to China should be aware of three broad regulatory requirements in the standards and testing area. First, AQSIQ maintains approximately 21,342 national standards as compiled by the end of 2004, of which about 3,045, or 14 per cent, are mandatory. These mandatory standards are known as Guojia Biaozhun or GB standards, are generally related to safety or quality, and are required of both domestic and imported products. Second, for products in 139 product categories (e.g. certain electrical products; information technology products; consumer appliances), China's CNCA requires that a safety and quality certification mark, the China Compulsory Certification (CCC) Mark, be obtained by a manufacturer before selling in or importing to China. Third, numerous government agencies in China mandate industry-specific standards or testing requirements for products under their jurisdiction, in addition to the GB standards and CCC Mark described above.

Standards Organizations

Technical regulations (mandatory standards or testing requirements) can be promulgated in China by the Standardization Administration of China (SAC) (under AQSIQ) or any of a number of government agencies.



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SAC has overall management responsibility for standards development in China and supervise the standards development work of approximately 264 Technical Committees, which develop GB standards. These Technical Committees are comprised of members from government agencies, private industry associations, companies (including in some cases, and with varying voting rights, foreign companies), and academia.

Other government agencies can approve and promulgate technical regulations. These agencies include the National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Education, Commission of Science, Technology and Industry for National Defence, Ministry of Public Security, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Land and Resources, Ministry of Construction, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Communications, Ministry of Information Industry, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Public Health, General Administration of Customs, State Environmental Protection Administration, General Administration of Civil Aviation, State Administration of Radio, Film and Television, State Food and Drug Administration and State Forestry Administration.

Conformity Assessment

The primary government agency responsible for supervision of China's conformity assessment policies, including its primary safety and quality mark, the CCC Mark, is the China National Certification and Accreditation Administration (CNCA). CNCA also supervises the work of the China National Accreditation Board for Laboratories (CNAL), which accredits laboratories and inspection bodies.

The main conformity assessment bodies that are recognized by China include the China Quality Certification Center, China Certification Center for Electromagnetic Compatibility, China Certification Center for Security and Protection, China Certification Center for Tires, China Certification Commission for Latex Products, Certification Center for Fire Products, Ministry of Public Security, China Certification Center for Automotive Products, China Certification Center for Agricultural Machinery, China Certification Center for Safety Glazing, Center of Boiler & Pressure Vessel Inspection and Research, the National Institute for the Control of Pharmaceutical and Biological Products, the Maritime Administration of the People's Republic of China and Register of Shipping at all levels, China Classification Society, Civil Aviation Administration of China, Register of Fishing Vessels of the People's Republic of China and local Register of Fishing Vessels.



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Product Certification

The China Compulsory Certification (CCC) Mark is China's national safety and quality mark. The mark is required for products in 139 categories, ranging from electrical fuses to toaster ovens to automobiles to information technology equipment. About 20 percent of U.S. exports to China are on the product list. If an exporter's product is on the CCC Mark list, it cannot enter China until CCC registration has been obtained, and the mark physically applied to individual products as an imprint or label. Similarly, domestic products cannot be sold in China without obtaining registration and applying the mark on individual products. The CCC Mark system is administered by CNCA.

Obtaining the CCC Mark involves an application process to authorized Chinese certification bodies. The application process can take three months or more, and can cost \$5,000 to \$15,000 in fees. The process includes sending testing samples to a Chinese laboratory and testing in those labs to ensure the products meet safety and/or electrical standards. A factory inspection of the applicant's factories, to determine whether the product line matches the samples tested in China, is also required. Finally, Chinese testing authorities approve the design and application of the CCC logo on the applicant's products. Some companies, especially those with a presence in China and with a dedicated certification/standards staff, are able to manage the application process in-house. Other exporters can tap the expertise of standards consultants based both in the U.S. and in China who can provide application management services and handle all aspects of the application process.

The U.S. Department of Commerce maintains a comprehensive CCC Mark website to help U.S. exporters determine whether they need the CCC Mark and how to apply. <http://www.mac.doc.gov/china/cccguid.htm>. The Department of Commerce has also sponsored CCC Mark Seminars in cities across the U.S. Contact the China Desk of the Department of Commerce, International Trade Administration or visit its website for more information.

Though the CCC Mark is China's most widely required product certification mark, other product certification requirements exist. These include requirements for boilers and pressure vessels, under a product certification regime administered by the Special Equipment Licensing Office of AQSIQ. Another product certification scheme is required for certain measurement equipment, known as Certificate of Pattern Approval, also administered by AQSIQ.



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Accreditation

The China National Accreditation Board for Laboratories (CNAL) is China's primary accreditation body, and it accredits laboratories and inspection bodies. Currently, no mutual recognition agreements with U.S. organizations exist.)

Publication of Technical Regulations

China indicated in submissions to the World Trade Organization that China's Ministry of Commerce Gazette or the AQSIQ Bulletin will publish all technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessment procedures. China is obligated by its WTO Technical Barriers to Trade requirements to notify WTO members of all technical regulations that impact trade and diverge from existing international standards. China's designated notification authority, the Ministry of Commerce, gives notice of proposed standards, technical regulations, and conformity assessment procedures, as required by the TBT Agreement. Almost all of these provided TBT measures have come from AQSIQ however, and have not included measures that other agencies should make available. In late 2003, in part to address this problem, China reportedly formed a new inter-agency committee with representatives from approximately 20 ministries and agencies and chaired by AQSIQ, to achieve better coordination on TBT (and SPS) matters.

As required by World Trade Organization Agreement rules, China maintains a National Inquiry Point to answer inquiries related to draft and finalized technical regulations, standards, conformity assessment procedures, and other related issues.

China's WTO TBT National Inquiry Point

7 Madian Dong Lu

Haidan District

Beijing, China 100088

Tel: 86-10-8826-0618

Fax: 86-10-8226-2448

e-mail: tbt@aqsiq.gov.cn

<http://www.tbt-sps.gov.cn>



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Labeling and Marking

As noted in the Product and Certification Section above, products requiring the CCC Mark, in addition to undergoing an application and testing process, must have the mark physically applied on products before entering China or being sold in China.

All products sold in China must be marked - in the Chinese language - with the relevant information. The State Administration for Quality Supervision, Inspection, and Quarantine (AQSIQ) requires imported and exported (but not domestic) food items such as candy, wine, nuts, canned food, and cheese to have labels verified and products tested for quality before a good can be imported or exported. According to the Food Labeling Standards of China, imported foods shall have clear markings that indicate the country of origin, in addition to the name and address of the general distributor registered in the country.)

Trade Agreements

In December 2001, China became a member of the World Trade Organization after more than 14 years of negotiations, making China party to the Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement, Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Agreement, Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPs) Agreement, and other multilateral agreements. China did not sign onto the plurilateral Government Procurement Agreement. The text of China's Accession Protocol as well as the Report of the Working Party on the Accession of China is available in printed form through the WTO. The Protocol on the Accession of the People's Republic of China, and the Report of the Working Party on the Accession of China, signed by China and other WTO members, have become part of the Marrakesh Agreement that established the World Trade Organization. Any trade agreement, signed by China and (an)other country/ies, should be in accordance with the rights and obligations enumerated in the above documents.

In addition to the World Trade Negotiations, China has also entered into numerous bilateral trade agreements, and is currently negotiating Free Trade Agreements with several countries.



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Web Resources

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

www.fmprc.gov.cn

National Development and Reform Commission

www.sdpc.gov.cn

Ministry of Education

www.moe.edu.cn

Ministry of Science and Technology

www.most.gov.cn

Commission of Science Technology and Industry for National Defense

www.costind.gov.cn

The Ministry of Public Security

www.mps.gov.cn

Ministry of Justice

www.legalinfo.gov.cn

Ministry of Finance

www.mof.gov.cn

The Ministry of Land and Resources

www.mlr.gov.cn

Ministry of Construction

www.cin.gov.cn

Ministry of Communications

www.moc.gov.cn

Ministry of Information Industry

www.mii.gov.cn

Ministry of Agriculture

www.agri.gov.cn

Ministry of Water Resources

www.mwr.gov.cn

Ministry of Culture

www.ccnt.gov.cn

Ministry of Commerce

www.mofcom.gov.cn

Ministry of Health

www.moh.gov.cn

State Administration For Industry & Commerce

www.saic.gov.cn

Customs General Administration

www.customs.gov.cn



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State Environmental Protection Administration of China

www.sepa.gov.cn

State Intellectual Property Office

www.cpo.cn.net

General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine

www.aqsiq.gov.cn/cms/template/index.html

Standardization Administration of the People's Republic of China

www.sac.gov.cn/home.asp

Certification Accreditation Administration

www.cnca.gov.cn

State Food and Drug Administration

www.sfda.gov.cn

China Special Equipment Inspection and Research Center

www.csei.org.cn/csei